GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3540
ANSWERED ON:21.03.2001
GRANTING OF VISAS
SIMRANJIT SINGH MANN

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Sikhs, who are Pakistani nationals, granted visas during 1999 and 2000 to visit historic Sikh Shrines in Punjab and other parts of India;

(b) the number of Hindus, who are Pakistani nationals, granted visas during the above mentioned period to visit Hindu Shrines in various parts of India;

(c) whether there has been any discrimination in the grant of visas on the basis of religion; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI U.V. KRISHNAM RAJU)

(a) & (b) The grant of visas to each other`s nationals by India and Pakistan is generally covered by the Visa Agreement between the two countries. This Agreement does not specifically provide for visas to individuals for visits to historic and sacred shrines. Group visits to designated shrines are covered under the bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines. Under the Protocol, Muslim pilgrim groups visit India and Sikh and Hindu Jathas visit Pakistan. However, in special cases the Government of India permits group visits by Pakistani Hindus and Sikhs to India.

The number of visas issued to Sikh and Hindu pilgrims from Pakistan over the last two years is as follows:

(i) Visas issued to Sikh pilgrims from Pakistan:

Year	No. of Applications Received	No. of Applications Rejected	No. of Visas Issued
1999	352	Nil	352
2000	Nil	Nil	Nil

(ii) Visas issued to Hindu pilgrims from Pakistan:

Year	No. of Applications Received	No. of Applications Rejected	No. of Visas Issued
1999	264	Nil	264
2000	132	Nil	132

(c) There has been no discrimination in the grant of visas to pilgrims from minority communities in Pakistan on the basis of religion.

(d) Does not arise.